4.

MISSIONARY

QUALIFICATIONS

AND PREPARATION

Missionary Qualifications and Preparation

Christian service requires the highest quality of character, the best of gift and talent, and therefore the proper training and equipment of the worker. This is doubly true of the mission field with its unlimited scope for the employment of every kind of gift and of every type of worker. Here too, largely through being in a strange land and among a strange people, special demands are made upon the missionary along spiritual, intellectual and physical lines. His qualifications and preparation might best be presented under these three heads.

Spiritual Qualifications

1) *Assurance of salvation* through the finished work of Christ and by personal appropriation of the promises of God. Satan may even try to challenge you concerning this with deadly subtlety.

2) *Fellowship with God* in the fulness of the Holy Spirit as an ever deepening daily experience—growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. Spiritual stagnation is a real danger.

3) A deep sincere *love for souls,* especially for the people to whom one is called. The winning of men to Christ should be the

missionary's life passion. It is surprisingly easy on the mission field to substitute other things for this, or to become harsh, censorious and legalistic.

4) *Soundness of faith.* A firm belief in the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and a knowledge and acceptance of its teachings. Knowing how to use the Word, especially in personal work.

5) *A sense of Divine commission,* of being under the Master's orders, of being a missionary (full time or otherwise) "by the will of God", of being called and sent forth to that field or type of work which God will eventually show to be His choice for you. Beware, however, of an overbearing assurance concerning God's will in particular matters, with little respect for the opinions of others and the leading God may have given them.

Intellectual Qualifications

1) *The ability to learn,* or knowing how to study. The missionary should be one who can observe, and can obtain and make use of information. He has to learn a foreign language or languages, and should acquire a knowledge of native customs and beliefs, of the people themselves, their thinking and reactions.

2) *The ability to teach,* i.e., to impart knowledge to others. He must be able to present the Christian message clearly and effective-

ly to those who have entirely different and firmly rooted ideas, and who may have little or no general knowledge. The missionary is under grave responsibility to preach the Gospel so that it is understood. See Matt. 13:19, 23.

3) *Open-mindedness.* Wideness of interests, reading and thinking are necessary to keep the missionary fresh and vital and capable of winning the friendship and confidence of the many types of people he will meet. A starved intellect or a rutted and narrow mind may render worse than useless the most zealous and orthodox worker. A trained, active and open mind is next in importance to a devout heart.

Physical Qualifications

The prospective missionary must be healthy and thoroughly sound in constitution, though particular disabilities are not always a bar to the foreign field. Certain types of work require extra robustness. Nervous and temperamental stability are of utmost importance.

Qualifications for a missionary also include the following:-

Humility. National as well as personal pride cannot be too strongly deprecated. The missionary must be ready to see the good in others and to learn from them.

Conscientiousness—a strong sense of responsibility towards God, his work, fellow-workers, supporters at home, and to the mission of which he is a part. E. g. being faithful in correspondence!

Patience, perseverance, endurance and purposefulness. Things move very slowly in most foreign lands. They are often done quite differently from what one has been accustomed to. The missionary has continually to face mishaps, disappointments, misunderstandings, injustices, perhaps insults, physical discomforts, hardships and much nervous strain. The odds against him are in many ways greater than at home. Read II Corinthians 6:1-10 and 11:23-28.

Adaptability. New, frequently changing and often trying circumstances are the missionary's lot. He must be able to adjust himself to them, to the people and their ways in the country of his 'adoption'. *A co-operative spirit* is essential, for he will be living and traveling at very close quarters with others. He must be able to work as a member of a team. *Tactfulness* is a most important asset, as is also a capacity for sympathy and understanding.

Commonsense—the ability to take reasonable precautions to guard one's health, safety and general well-being. This includes such things as knowing how to relax, rest and keep oneself young in spirit.

Humor. This is indispensable in daily living

and contacts and often saves the day in an awkward or unpleasant situation.

Character or poise—mental and spiritual balance. Extremes are disastrous. Piety without character is dangerous, as is zeal without wisdom.

PREPARATION FOR THE MISSION FIELD

Spiritual Preparation

1) *Development of devotional habits.* Knowing how to feed on God's Word without any or many 'helps'; getting daily strength and direction from it; memorization of Scripture. A systematic, comprehensive prayer life. If these are not developed beforehand, there will be little likelihood of their being developed after reaching the field.

2) *Knowledge of the Bible and of Christian doctrine and history.* This is usually best obtained at a Bible School or reliable Seminary, including if possible courses in missions. Correspondence courses are available if attendance at a School or Seminary is impossible.

3) *Practical experience in Christian service* as obtained at Bible School and in direct church work under an able pastor or other Christian leader—Sunday School, Young Peoples', visitation, street preaching, etc.

4) *Personal witness and soul-winning.* Know-

ing how to make a spiritual diagnosis and how to use the Word of God in dealing with individuals.

Intellectual Preparation

A sound general education is necessary. University or college education is very desirable, as those equipped in this way are increasingly needed on the mission fields of today, but missionary personnel is by no means limited to such workers.

Many *special subjects,* such as psychology and logic, can be turned to good account on the field, also business knowledge and experience, and almost any professional or technical training.

A knowledge of *phonetics and linguistics* is invaluable. Instruction in these two important subjects for missionary use is given by the Wycliffe Bible Translators at their summer institutes.

The cultivation of some special interest in the realm of art, literature or music, or of some practical hobby, is desirable within limits and may prove of real use, as well as being a splendid form of recreation.

Physical Preparation

Observe carefully all the rules of health. Try to build up a reserve of physical strength. Do as much walking as possible, cycling, etc. The ability to swim may become extremely

useful one day! Without going to excess, seek to inure yourself to physical hardships and discomforts.

An early medical examination to determine one's fitness for the foreign field is to be recommended.

Missionary Knowledge

In addition to the above, the prospective missionary should certainly learn all he can about *life and work on the foreign field*. Read missionary magazines, biographies and other books. "Ambassadors for Christ" (by Mildred Cable and Francesca French. Hodder & Stoughton) meets a great need in this connection. Talk with missionaries, and attend as many missionary meetings as possible. Learn about other fields as well as the one in which you may be specially interested.

Study *missionary principles and history*. Learn something of *world religions*. Dr. R. H. Glover's "Progress of World-Wide Missions"; "Missionary Methods—St. Paul's or Ours?" and other publications of the World Dominion Movement (156 Fifth Avenue, New York City) should be regarded as "must" reading, also "The Dynamic of Service" (by Paget Wilkes. Japan Evangelistic Band).

Medical Knowledge

A knowledge of first aid, use of simple

remedies, elementary nursing, teeth extraction, sanitation, etc. is of great importance if not essential. If possible take a proper course in missionary medicine and hygiene such as is provided by the Missionary Medical Institute, 14 Park Rd., Toronto, Canada, especially if you expect to go to a pioneer field.

Miscellaneous

A knowledge of the following subjects will almost certainly come in useful—carpentry, building, gardening, care of horses, cows, etc., cooking, dietetics, photography, radio, mechanics, driving, stenography, keeping accounts, the latter being a "must".

"Who is sufficient for these things? . . . Our sufficiency is of God."

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